Jisc

In the context of Open Access policies in the UK, what is a "repository"?

Introduction

This short note provides a definition of the term "repository" as it is used in Open Access policies relevant to UK researchers and institutions. Its purpose is to clarify what is understood by the sector to be a repository.

Toward a definition

In 2003, Clifford Lynch of the Coalition for Networked Information defined a university-based institutional repository as "a set of services that a university offers to the members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by the institution and its community members". Since repositories can be offered by organisations other than universities, this definition needs some amendment for UK OA policy landscape. The development of repositories since 2003, and the aims of UK OA policies, also allow the some specificity to be attached to some of the terms used. Hence, the following definition, with attached footnotes, is proposed:

"A repository is a set of services[1] that a research organisation[2] offers[3] to the members of its community[4] for the management and dissemination[5] of digital materials[6] created by its community members".

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[1] Those services should include at least: deposit of items into the repository; creation of associated metadata; indexing; dissemination of those materials with declared terms of access and use; and a defined level of ongoing stewardship. These services should feature, where appropriate, a high level of interoperability with other local and third party services. Since these functions are offered as services, then there is an expectation that they will continue to be offered.

[2] A research organisation either funds academic research in UK universities, or is an organisation eligible to receive research grants from the UK Research Councils.

[3] A research organisation may offer these services itself, or through a third party, under an arrangement that ensures the research organisation retains control over the repository. The terms under which the services are offered to the research community are fully and openly defined, and are consistent with academic and scholarly norms.

[4] Where the research organisation funds research, then its community may be its grant holders. Where a research organisation employs researchers, then they may constitute its community. A research organisation may, as is the case with Cornell hosting arXiv, offer a repository to a broader community.

[5] For the purposes of OA policies, "dissemination" implies open dissemination, under defined open licences, through standard and documented technical and user interfaces, with no need to log in to the system. It also implies a commitment to users of the material, as well as to its creators, that once material is made available, it will remain available either by the repository, or through the implementation of a defined exit plan.

[6] The digital materials covered will be defined by the relevant OA policy.